

REMARKS

The Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 1, 3-16, and 18-22 are pending. Claim 2 is cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter set forth therein. Claims 17 and 23 were previously cancelled.

Claim 1 is amended. Claims 1, 21, and 22 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that claims 21 and 22 are allowed, and that claims 2-4 and 14-16 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

In response, independent claim 1 is amended herein to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 2. Claim 2 is cancelled.

Accordingly, independent claim 1 is now in condition for allowance.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claim 1-3, 5-13 and 18-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Lazzeroni et al. (U.S. Publication 2002/0176595) in view of Hicks (U.S. 5,926,925), and further in view of Slater (U.S. 6, 774,557).

This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As mentioned above, but not while conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance the prosecution of the present application, independent claim 1 is amended herein to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 2. Claim 2 is cancelled.

Therefore, independent claim 1 is in condition for allowance.

Independent claims 21 and 22 are allowed.

All pending dependent claims are in condition for allowance due to their dependence on allowable independent claim 1, or due to the novel subject matter set forth therein.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject claims, but merely to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

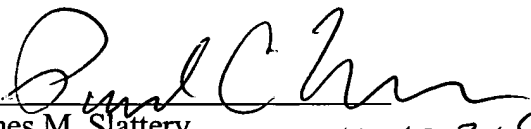
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If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Dated: March 20, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

By 
James M. Slattery
Registration No.: 28,380 #43368
for BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP
8110 Gatehouse Rd
Suite 100 East
P.O. Box 747
Falls Church, Virginia 22040-0747
(703) 205-8000
Attorney for Applicant